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SUBJECT: ICELAND IN NO RUSH TO ASSIST NEW PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

REF: STATE 21256

¶1. Post discussed reftel points with Icelandic MFA Head of International Institutions Division Nikulas Hannigan February 10. Hannigan took note of U.S concerns about a new Palestinian Authority government that has not committed to non-violence, and he affirmed that Iceland generally supports the Quartet statements regarding Hamas. He stated that while Iceland contributes to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (note: to the tune of U.S. \$45,000 in 2004, according to latest available UNRWA figures), it provides no bilateral aid to the Palestinians and has none planned. He added that, as far as he knew, the Government of Iceland had no bilateral contacts with Palestinian representatives or delegations.

¶2. Referring to Middle Eastern protests in response to the Danish Mohammed cartoons, Hannigan remarked that, given the current "Nordic profile" in that region, he did not anticipate that Reykjavik would soon initiate aid to the Palestinian Authority. (Note: An Icelandic newspaper reported last week that the honorary Icelandic consul in Amman had taken down the Icelandic flag outside her office for fear it could be mistaken for its Danish or Norwegian cousins. Another newspaper carried a column from an Icelandic journalist in Iran who reported that anti-cartoon demonstrators had told her that, had she been Danish, they would have killed her.) Icelanders have reacted with bemusement and distaste to radical Islam's violent hijacking of what they believe should have been a debate about good taste and freedom of expression.

VAN VOORST